



News Release

For Immediate Release
Monday, August 4, 2008
Media Contact:
David Neville
(801) 538.6917
(801) 386.1316

UDOH Warns Against Fire Danger Associated with Cigarettes

New law requires smokes to have reduced propensity for fire

(Salt Lake City) – Legislation went into effect July 1 stating that cigarettes sold in Utah must be manufactured to reduce the chance of fire. The purpose of the law is to help reduce fires and fire-caused fatalities in Utah homes and landscapes.

Tobacco products are the leading cause of preventable home fire deaths in the United States. Data from the Utah State Fire Marshal show 269 smoking-related fires in the Beehive State between 2003 and 2007, resulting in six deaths, 30 injuries, and millions of dollars in property damage.

Reduced fire propensity cigarettes, commonly called 'fire-safe,' are made by wrapping additional, less-porous paper in two or three bands around the cigarette. When the flame reaches these 'speed bump' bands, the burning slows and the cigarette self-extinguishes. The state of New York enacted a similar law in 2004 and saw deaths decline from 48 per year to 28.

“As tobacco usage has declined in the U.S., fires caused by smoking have also dropped by nearly 40 percent since 1980,” said David Neville, marketing coordinator, Tobacco Prevention and Control Program, Utah Department of Health. “The term ‘fire-safe’ is really a misnomer, since no tobacco product is safe. This new law aims to reduce the fire danger associated with cigarettes, but the health hazards still remain,” added Neville. Smoking harms nearly every organ in the body, causing cancer, heart disease, and respiratory diseases. It is a leading cause of death in Utah.”

-MORE-

Page 2 of 2 - UDOH Warns Against Fire Danger Associated with Cigarettes

Every day more than 1,500 people nationally under the age of 18 become regular smokers. About one-third of them will eventually die from a tobacco-related disease. Ninety percent of smokers started smoking before the age of 19 and most teens who smoke say if they could do it over again, they would never start. Nearly 200,000 Utahns continue to smoke cigarettes, and more than 1,100 Utahns die annually as result of their own smoking. For more information visit www.tobaccofreeutah.org.

###

The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.